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AUTHOR Weaver, Charles E.
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ABSTRACT

The author initially identifies what is meant by Appalachia, its geography its resources, and its cultural, educational and economic disadvantagement. The priorities of the Appalachian Regional Commission established in 1965, are listed: (1) interstate highway corridors; (2) the furtherance of career exploration and orientation programs in upper elementary and junior high school years; and (3) job training in vocational high schools. Subsequent educationally and work related goals for the area are included. On several pages is reproduced a recent front-page newspaper article which provides considerable insights into Appalachian students. The paper concludes with twenty of the author's suggestions and recommendations pertinent to the question: what can counselors do to change attitudes on a local level in developing new programs? (TL)

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STUDENTS OF APPALACHIA

(Presented at the Education-Business Relations Program Planning Workshop, Concord College Student Center Conference Room, Athens, West Virginia, May 12, 1971)

--Dr. Charles E. Weaver
State Supervisor
Guidance Field Services
Ohio Department of Education

For this presentation I have been asked to develop four topics as follows:

1. Peculiarity of the students in Appalachia.
2. Differences from normal students.
3. Trends in aspiration levels and how these attitudes may be changed in these students.
4. What can counselors do to change these attitudes on a local level in developing new programs?

I would like to begin by identifying what is meant by Appalachia. The Appalachian mountain range is inland from the Atlantic coast and stretches 1,300 miles from Vermont to northern Alabama. Included are counties in Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. We are told that this underdeveloped area of rugged topography has the nation's largest concentration of deprived people. Within the region's approximately 175,000 square miles are hilly ridges and twisting streams running through many valleys. It is up-and-down hill-and hollow country. This territory is sandwiched between the prosperous Atlantic seaboard and the industrial Midwest with Atlanta, Georgia at its base. Because of a combination of lack of roads, long isolation, exploitation, and neglect, it has been overlooked and outdistanced by the rest of the United States.

Analysts believe that Appalachia ought to be a prosperous area for it receives more rain than the national average, contains some of the nation's richest mineral deposits including two-thirds of the country's coal, and possesses unexcelled

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beauty in its mountain landscapes with three-fifths of its land richly forested. We have been informed, however, that locked into the diverse checkerboard pattern of its rural and urban subregions is a hard-core poverty that makes it the most underdeveloped region in the United States.

According to statistical reports, until very recently, the unemployed in Appalachia constitute 7.1% of its labor force as compared to about 4% of the remainder of the United States. This percentage of unemployed would be even greater except for the fact that many unemployed former residents have gone elsewhere for jobs. As is generally true, Appalachia's unemployed and underemployed are on welfare. It is reported that many of these sit on rural front porches or crowd the streets of poor towns.

An education gap exists in Appalachia due primarily to the lack of a sufficient tax base to provide adequate education. Dr. Franklin Parker of West Virginia University reported in the Fall Issue of the Phi Kappa Phi Journal that recent statistics show that for every 100 persons over age 25, 11.6 persons in Appalachia had less than a fifth grade education, that 32.3 persons in Appalachia had finished high school, that 5.2 persons in Appalachia had four or more years of college, and that of the ten states in the nation with the lowest percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds in school, eight were Appalachian states. He also stated that while the national military rejection rate for mental reasons in 1964 was 27.6%, comparative figures in Appalachian states were 51% in North Carolina, 41% in Kentucky, and 36% in West Virginia. In addition, most Appalachian states ranked below the national norms in National Merit Scholarship test scores.

Dr. Parker has noted that in the area of retail sales, bank savings, value and quality of housing, Appalachia has fallen behind the rest of the United States. He stated, "The picture is one of poverty, a condition which has existed for several generations and is illustrasted in Federal food programs and other wel-

fare assistance which in Appalachia are 45% above the rest of the nation. The result is a record of inefficiency, of lost hope, of the American dream unfulfilled, and of a region thwarted by historic neglect."

Another term for Appalachians is "The Mountain People." Many of these were poor immigrants from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland who moved to the back country and the mountains. These locations reminded them of their ancestral lands so they stayed there enjoying their freedom and having no desire to change. The result was "isolation, clannishness, superstition, and backwardness." As a consequence the people of Appalachia fell behind the rest of the United States in the growth of population, transportation, communication, roads, and schools.

Often the homes in Appalachia have few, if any, books. Children needing help in homework find little encouragement. Prior to 1960 teachers were often hired on a personal rather than a professional basis. Since 1960 a new thrust has emerged aimed at reversing Appalachia's downward trend.

In 1961 a group of Appalachian governors met with President John F. Kennedy at the White House. Following this meeting, President Kennedy in 1963 established the President's Appalachian Regional Commission. Exactly a year later the Commission sent its report to President Lyndon B. Johnson. The proposals were packaged into a bill which was signed into law in 1965. From this the Appalachian Regional Commission was born.

The Appalachian Regional Commission recognized Appalachia as an "island in the midst of affluence" which had been largely bypassed by national transportation routes. As a result interstate highway corridors to open Appalachia to national commerce and access roads for local people to get to jobs, schools, and hospitals became their top priority.

In 1966, the Appalachian Regional Commission established an Education Advisory Committee. This committee discovered that the dropout rate between the first and the twelfth grades averaged 65% and in some areas was as high as 71%

compared with an estimated national average dropout rate of 36.2%. In 1968 this dropout rate was reduced to about 55% which was still about 35% higher than the national average. As can be anticipated, the dropout rate was especially critical in rural schools.

The retardation rate for youths in Appalachian schools is also higher than the national average. The dropout rate and the retardation problems are the natural results of sparse rural populations, geographic isolation, the low educational attainment of parents, and the meager tax base of most small communities.

National Education Association reports indicate that teacher turnover is high. By the end of their first four years of service, 65% of the younger teachers leave for higher pay outside the region.

A second priority of the Appalachian Regional Commission is to further career exploration and orientation programs in the upper elementary school and the junior high school years. A third priority is job training in vocational high schools. Reports indicate that Appalachia's vocational enrollment is focused on the high school level. According to Dr. Parker, Appalachian high schools account for 72% of the region's total vocational enrollment, with relatively small enrollment in post-secondary and adult vocational programs.

In 1969 the Appalachian Regional Commission's Educational Advisory Committee recommended the establishment of educational development centers to advance the three priorities of early childhood education, career information and work experience, and vocational training. Since then, four further recommendations have been made. First, establish a Human Resources Council in each Appalachian state as a planning center where key education and welfare agency heads and planning officers would develop five-year programs on contract with the state governor's planning office. Second, establish a model agency in each Appalachian state that

would divide its resources on developing programs in the three priority areas and on co-systems. Third, establish one Appalachian Regional Agency to develop model career information and work experience programs. Fourth, establish two Higher Education Centers to prepare teachers and paraprofessional aides needed to implement the three priorities and also to develop a college student exchange permitting non-Appalachian college students to work under supervision in Appalachia, and Appalachian college students to gain experiences outside of Appalachia.

In order to provide further insights into the "Students of Appalachia" I would like to share with you a front-page article from the Saturday, April 10, 1971 Columbus Citizen-Journal entitled, "City No Promised Land To Migrants." It was written by Betty Garrett, a Citizen-Journal staff writer.

> "There's no freedom in the city," Sidney Jarrell, 48, has decided in the 15 years since he left Mingo County, West Virginia, for Columbus.
>
> Lighting uncomfortably on the edge of a chair in his rented house, the mountaineer seemed paused in flight. "You're all jammed up together here and can't do nothin' 'cept talk to neighbors. Can't even grow grass.
>
> "I put out seed, but the ground's too hard and people stomped on it anyway. Another thing, there's always governors and big people and rules tellin' you what to do."
>
> Transplanted but still tentative about it, Jarrell is one of more than an estimated 100,000 Appalachians who have felt forced by hardships and lack of work to migrate to cities like Columbus, Cincinnati, Detroit and Chicago in the last decade.
>
> "Sidney worked in the coal mines 20 years," his wife explained. "There's not much to do down there except mine and construction work. My father was a hard-workin' coal miner--hard work and coal-minin' asthma is what killed him.
>
> "Guess Sidney woulda worked in them mines all his life, too, but I asked him to leave. I got tired of having him come in from the fields all dirty and wore out. And I wanted our kids to have a better chance at getting an education. So we came up here in 1955."

Like many other pilgrims to industrial meccas, the Jarrells have discovered that big, northern cities present unique problems for them. "I felt scared," Mrs. Jarrell admits bluntly.

"I don't know why, I'd just been turned loose in a big wide world I wasn't used to. And I was worried about my husband, pullin' him out of the mines to come up here and make less money than he did."

"He got a job at a factory at $1.05 an hour. I've been denied of them (factory jobs) because I've got no experience or factory education.

Back home I got to the seventh grade, but later I went to night school two years and then I went to Bible School up here two years, but I still don't feel too bright," she grinned disarmingly.

"I have worked for laundries though. The most I could make was $1.50 an hour, and I had to work four presses in a day to get that. You got to put out the steam to do 50 shirts in an hour. They worked my damn brains out."

Things got harder yet when her husband, who's blind in one eye, "got his back busted up on a job about 12 years ago, helping to cut metal in a factory."

The family is living now on $242 a month: $142 from his non-service-connected government disability; $100 from the Franklin County Welfare Department.

"I buy food stamps--we get $144 a month-worth for $68--and I go to the supermarkets and catch the sales, have to. Sure, I still do home-cookin'. I love my beans, I love my greens, I love my potatoes ... and when I can get some, I sure like a piece of meat to go with 'em.

"I try to clothe my kids myself. I starch and iron their clothes even if I have to wash some of them out every other night. I don't ask nobody for nothin'. I do it on the $242 a month, no matter what."

Another severe problem for Appalachians moving into cities is housing. "The hardest thing was, we couldn't find a place to stay," Mrs. Jarrell related. "Some places won't take kids. We had two when we come up here, then two more.

"The last time we had twins, and one of them died, and the hospital bills took up all the money we managed to save working up here. Anyways, we did get one nice place at first, but then we got a bedbug-row place that was also cockroach-row."

Her husband counterpointed, "There's been cockroaches and rats about every place we went."

"We've rented off some awful good people," Mrs. Jarrell offered kindly. "It's just that some of the places they owned were awful bad."

Looking around their present South Side home, which they've decorated with pictures of the crucifixion and a chalk Beagle dog statue, she said, "This is one of the best we've rented. I know it's a hole to live in, but it's the best you can get for $55."

Out front, their Stanaford-st home is surrounded by a desolate yard where the flowers Mrs. Jarrell loves won't grow. Broken cars litter the neighborhood, and country music drifts from many of the neighboring windows.

This South Side Columbus is considered sort of a "port of entry" for many migrants from the hills--who are sometimes referred to in other residents' slang as "GTOs" ("Going to Ohio").

Vestiges of the folk culture many cling to are reflected throughout the area in storefront churches (largely fundamentalist) and "hillbilly" bars.

Unfortunately, the neighborhood is also studded with clip joints ready to "take" the unwary newcomers on overpriced cheap merchandise through long-term, high-interest financing.

Old ties to the land still cling. Mr. and Mrs. Jarrell love to "head out anywhere you can put a pole down and fish." Once they even tried raising rabbits.

"The IGA store gave us garbage to feed them, but we couldn't keep 'em filled up despite that, and then we couldn't sell 'em."

Despite drawbacks, Mrs. Jarrell says she doesn't feel unwelcome in Ohio. "I feel personal in this state."

"But when I think on it," she analyzed, "I've been here in Columbus 15 years, and haven't changed nary a one of my ways.

"I'm proud of being a hillbilly. Now you take my mother, when she comes up here, I can't get her to stay. She's got to get back to the good old state of West Virginia.

"Sometimes I'd like to go back, too, but I think the kids has a better chance here. The last two, Linda (14) and Gerald Fitzgerald (11), who was named after John Fitzgerald Kennedy, I figure they're Buckeyes."

"They argue with me and say they want to be hillbillies too, but I say they can't, 'cause they got born up here in White Cross Hospital. Right now the oldest kids, Sidney (17) and Gladys (18), are waiting on their first checks from the WIN program at welfare. They're gettin' job-trained."

Gladys explained that, despite migrant parents' desires for the 'kids education,' "about 50 per cent of the kids that come up here from the hills go to school but drop out.

"I did. Felt the other kids was laughing at me. I didn't have the right kind of clothes after our house caught fire and I didn't feel sure of myself. I don't really like the city."

"You can't find anything to do up here except go to bars and junky places, seems. A lot of girls from the hills hang around them places and get messed up and end up with a houseful of kids. They oughta know better."

She sees the WIN program as a pretty good chance to get a job, and talks of buying pretty clothes for her younger sister, so she won't feel "out of place" in school.

"I reckon there's still a lot of things here I don't understand," Mrs. Jarrell commented. "You take these riot things. I was raised with colored people and I got no knowledge of bad feelings about them. Way I see it, there's good and bad folks in both colors."

"Another way I see it, it's all in the way you treat other people. We got a lot of hillbilly friends and do a lot of visiting with them, but I get along with Buckeyes all right, too. I can get along with anybody."

To reinforce that, Mrs. Jarrell ended the interview with a smile and a traditional parting among hill folks:

"Don't leave this be your last visit."

Keeping in mind the experiences of the Jarrell family during the past fifteen years the question can rightfully be asked,"What can counselors do to change attitudes on a local level in developing new programs?" In response to this question, I would like to offer twenty suggestions and recommendations.

1. Promoting approaches to helping students to more easily adjust to school when they enter, and to be happy as they progress through school.

2. Assisting in developing the concept that pupils should learn very early in the elementary school of the great varieties of ways in which people earn a living.

3. Encouraging the provision of opportunities to observe people at work in a variety of settings so that students can learn of the nature of the work including its advantages, disadvantages, and opportunities.

4. Encouraging pupils to participate in school activities.

5. Assisting students to enroll in and make satisfactory progress in courses that are best suited to their interests, aptitudes, and abilities.

6. Providing opportunities for students to be aware of the requirements for a job, for apprenticeship training, for short term post high school education, and for college admittance.

7. Creating an awareness that upon graduation from high school students can enroll in many colleges regardless of the courses taken in high school.

8. Assisting graduates and school leavers in separating from school to have a realistic plan for the next step.

9. Assuring academically able graduates or "high-risk" students of their opportunities in, and assisting them to enter, institutions of higher learning.

10. Assisting graduates who do not plan to enter college, but who would find further study advantageous in technical, trade, or other schools, to be aware of their opportunities and to enter these schools.

11. Encouraging the provision of broadened school curricula so that a greater percentage of graduates and other school leavers not entering college or other schools may be qualified to enter suitable employment immediately after leaving school.

12. Informing and encouraging graduates and other school leavers to return to their school for help if they think that the school can assist them with any problems.

13. Encouraging the inclusion of special remedial programs in school curricula beginning early in the elementary school and continuing throughout high school and for adults.

14. Requesting Appalachia youth to suggest solutions to their problems and encouraging them to develop themselves so that they will consider it a challenge to assist in implementing solutions.

15. Creating an awareness of the school administrators, staff, parents, students, and community of what is involved in a total guidance program and encouraging their participation in it.

16. Assisting in developing some approaches to follow-up and placement of graduates and other school leavers and determining how this information can best be utilized with students, school staff, parents, and community.

17. Being intensely informed of the course offerings available in vocational schools and exploring approaches of how this information can best be communicated to students.

18. Determining what occupations and jobs are available locally, and what occupations and jobs are desired by the students.

19. Inviting personnel from business and industry to talk to students in the same manner that college admission personnel are permitted to do in most schools.

20. Assisting in providing a developmental approach so as to tie together programs at the elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in a meaningful manner for students.

Solving the youth crisis in Appalachia will require a combination of imaginative program strategies. The challenge is not merely to educate in the usual sense. Solutions will require cooperative approaches involving counselors plus the entire school staff, business and community leaders, a continuation of planning and funding by the Appalachian Regional Commission's Educational Advisory Committee, coupled with additional workshops such as you have planned for this week which will provide opportunities to develop closer working relationships between education and business. You face a fight against the deadliest of all diseases which is poverty. All of you here today are VERY IMPORTANT PERSONS in this pursuit. Your efforts can and will produce results that count.

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